From 'African Cinema' to Film Services industries: A Cinematic Fact

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Abstract

This article problematises the universally used phrase 'African cinema' and explores how it can be examined in terms of a film services framework, which includes both industrial criteria and ideological shifts, as a way of deepening screen media studies in searching for a more holistic value chain framework. The main argument is that the idea of 'African cinema' especially as defined from racial, continental or ideological points of view, is outworn, reductive and in need of revision. The article complements other scholarly work situated in cinematic fact contexts of production.

Keywords:
African cinema
film services
cinematic fact
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production

Introduction

The terms 'film' and 'cinema' are often used interchangeably. Robert Stam et al. (1992) distinguish between 'cinematic fact' and 'filmic fact'. Filmic fact refers to the signifying text. Cinematic fact offers a multi-dimensional sense of cinema as an institution, which includes pre-filmic events such as the economic infrastructure of the studio system and technology, as well as the post-filmic, which includes distribution and exhibition. Our paper embraces the cinematic fact definition in an effort to continue the discussion that problematises the universally used phrases of 'African cinema' and 'African film industry'. Although 'African cinema' has been problematized previously (see Barlet 2000; Tcheuyap 2011; Dovey 2015; Tomaselli 1993), our current work attempts to import some industry qualifiers into the discussion. Acknowledging that this is a continuing debate, we suggest that for analyses of film production contexts to be holistic, a film services approach could be considered (see Goldsmith and O'Regan 2005; Goldsmith et al 2010). Analyses of film industries should not be limited to

products and texts (filmic fact) but extend to the processes and activities (services) leading to production. Our literature review critically examines scholarly work on 'African cinema' in an attempt to problematise the term within Stam et al's (1992) framework and, additionally, incorporating film services as a way of deepening screen media studies in searching for a more holistic value chain framework. We do not here present empirical data to support the suggested approach, although some initial work has been done in South Africa on the topic (Visser 2014; Tomaselli 2013; Mboti and Tomaselli 2013) and with regard to Zimbabwe (Ureke 2016) and Tanzania (Mhando and Kipeja 2010).

We sketch an initial framework that situates empirical work already done on film services and link that framework to discussion of 'African cinema', in addition to suggesting that the global interconnectedness of such industries offers innovative opportunities to producers and directors.[1] Our work may be viewed as a continuation of various media industries approaches (see Havens, Lotz and Tinic 2009) anchored on political economy and sociology but with a bias towards micro-analysis of individual and collective creativity located within different film production contexts. As such, it is only one of many strands of analytical theories in the study of screen media in Africa. The article defines a film services framework and specifies contexts in which its use may be appropriate.

Under a film services approach, intervention and analysis is not focused on the film product but the "intermediate inputs, organisational arrangements, and expertise associated with the processes involved in developing film projects" (Goldsmith and O'Regan, 2005:55). The approach is proffered here as only one of many ways of revising the notion of 'African cinema', which has mostly hinged on racial, geographical and textual-ideological classifications. Such a revision resides in, among other examples, post-apartheid responses to the work and activism of black director Simon Mbunu Sabela, whose 14 (state-financed) feature films made during apartheid were produced by multiracial South African technicians and mostly black actors. The post-apartheid rehabilitation of Sabela goes to the heart of the exclusion of South Africa from 'Africa' prior to 1994 (Hees 1993).

[1] Prior studies that leverage the film services framework with regard to specific films have been done (Mboti 2011b) and are under way via the Media Cities: Mapping Urbanity and Audiovisual Configurations project being led by Ivo Ritzer (Bayreuth University) and Keyan Tomaselli.

Sabela directed his feature films while employed by Heyns Films. It later emerged that the financing had been clandestinely allocated by the Department of Information, part of the state's propaganda machinery (see Tomaselli 1988:65). Where Sabela was thus considered by some as a sell-out during apartheid, his film corpus and his covert anti-apartheid activities are now recognized in the establishment in 2012 of the annual Simon Mbunu Sabela Awards as representative of 'African film'. His and other 'black' films produced by white-owned firms are being subjected to a revisionist analysis that recognizes cinematic fact work on the basis of criteria other than exclusion based on source of funding and ownership of the production house. The provision of film services and financing is in this new analysis de-linked from the identification of Sabela-the-director-as *auteur*. Black audiences were watching Sabela's films while many so-called 'white films' such as those made by Ross Devenish and Athol Fugard, and David Bensusan, Darrell Roodt, and Oliver Schmidt, amongst others, were actually critical of apartheid (Tomaselli 2007), applying a variety of Second and Third Cinema styles and expressionism. Apart from the Jan Rautenbach and Emil Nofal, films that were critical of aspects of Afrikaner Nationalism, these directors mostly failed to source state funding.

Pre-theoretical observations that ignore key critical studies of Afrikaans-language cinema could not have anticipated the rehabilitation of Sabela by the new black South African political elite after 2010, let alone the belated recognition of a white Afrikaans-speaking director like Tonie van der Merwe, who made a 'black' movie, *Joe Bullet* (1974), with black South African actors intended for black audiences (under the B-scheme subsidy). The film was banned, one assumes, for its depiction of violent black-men-with guns battling out their respective constituencies' destinies. The re-mastered video re-release was billed at the 2014 Durban International Film Festival (DIFF) as a 'world premiere' and it obtained general cinema exposure in early 2016. The film's director was also recipient of a "Heroes and Legends" award at the second Simon Mbunu Sabela Awards ceremony in 2014 (see Steyl, 2014). Thus do even those previously assumed (correctly or incorrectly) to have been complicit with the apartheid regime become disarticulated from that ideology and are now popularly re-articulated into the new post-apartheid revisionism – the recovery of black contributions (even if made possible by white-dominated and/or state-sourced capital). Both Van der Merwe and Sabela were now rehabilitated as legitimate personalities in the 104-year history of South African cinematic fact, further underscored by crucial re-readings of Sabela's *uDeliwe* (1974) and other films by scholars such as Litheko Modisane (2013) and Lindiwe Dovey and Angela Impey (2010) of *African Jim* (Donald Swanson, 1949). The ideological significance of the black-

centered industry during the 1970s and '80s has been also recently re-examined with regard to narratives of social mobility and economic upliftment (Paleker 2011).

Another pertinent example is that of Sudanese producer Gadalla Gubara Al-Faki, perhaps the first black African filmmaker, who received his training and filmmaking experience from the British Colonial Film Unit (CFU) in the 1940s (Ukadike 2002; Dovey 2015). In spite of all the criticism leveled against the Unit, especially because it excluded Africans from the production value chain, and was painfully didactic (see Smyth 1992), Gubara's case is exceptional. The experiences he gained from the CFU were critical to his appointment to head the Sudan Film Unit soon after the country attained independence (Ukadike 2002). It is worth noting that Gubara's first feature film, *Tajouj* (1977), was made with the assistance of an Egyptian crew, although the popular label of the film as a Sudanese feature fails to acknowledge the Egyptian film services that contributed towards it. Ukadike (2002) observes that Gubara had claimed to be the first African filmmaker, a description that he would quickly revise to first 'black African' filmmaker when reminded of Algeria's Felix Misguich, who was filming for the Lumière brothers in North Africa as early as 1896. One assumes that Gubara felt entitled to the 'African' identity as he was presumably filming for a black Sudanese audience, compared to the Algerian pioneers whom he labeled 'French' because of their close associations with the colonial centre, made possible by France's assimilation policy. A film services analysis of this case could reveal that Gubara was a service provider for some films made by the CFU in Sudan, while Misguich was probably the first camera service provider from Africa, although his production efforts were invested into films made by the French pioneers. These specific cinematic facts would be disguised if Gubara and Misguich were universally labeled 'African' filmmakers. There are many similar cases, including that of Guadeloupe-originated Sarah Maldoror, whose major film work is about Africa (Tcheuyap 2011).

In the Zimbabwean context there are nascent efforts to employ a film services framework to study the country's production value chain (Ureke 2016a). Such an effort begins from analyzing the involvement of international production companies, such as the Cannon Group soon after independence. That era saw the production of films such as *King Solomon's Mines* (1985), *Allain Quartermein and the Lost City of Gold* (1986) and *Cry Freedom* (1987). The films, though set in Zimbabwe and employing some local talent, utilized Hollywood film production services. As a result, these films are missing from the corpus of 'African cinema' and are contested for their being/not being Zimbabwean films (Thompson 2013). Their

'foreign' film services (for instance the directors and main actors) seemingly dilute their 'African' purity, even though there were numerous Zimbabwean service providers on their production value chains. The films were processed at the country's Central Film Laboratories (CFL) and provided a launch pad for many of Zimbabwe's prominent black film and television personalities such as Stephen Chigorimbo and the late Simon Shumba and Isaac Mabhikwa. The influx of Hollywood companies into Zimbabwe at the time, which led Ukadike (1994) to remark that the country was 'Africa's Hollywood', was a response to, or coincided with, the government strategy '*Why you should film in Zimbabwe'* which marketed the country as a film friendly location. (Thompson 2013; Hungwe 2005). An analysis that discounts those productions from the 'African cinema' corpus on the basis of race and origin of finance, therefore, misses the many benefits that accrued to black Africans who featured in the films as service providers of numerous capabilities. Thompson (2013) grapples with the contestations surrounding 'Zimbabwean' cinema, wondering whether this classification refers to films made by Zimbabweans, those made by foreigners using Zimbabwean talent and locations, or those made for Zimbabwean audiences (see Ureke 2016b). From the foregoing, one can argue that to believe in a truly 'African' corpus of films that share historical specificity would be to imply that they share the same film services and reception peculiarities, which is a fallacy.

The problem of 'African cinema'

The few cases cited above demonstrate how universalist definitions, such as 'African cinema' narrow the focus of analysis when studying the cinematic fact. Many scholars write about African cinema as if it were one entity: insiders against outsiders, with (negative) exploitation argued to be the *raison d'etre* of business collaboration (see Ukadike 2002 and 2013; Armes 2006). Ukadike (2013:2), for example, argues that much "African film production is scarcely African at all" as it results from cheap labour. This resonates with the thinking of journalist Georges Sadoul (1960) who observed bluntly:

> Sixty five years after the invention of the cinema, not one truly African feature length film has been produced to my knowledge. By that I mean a film *acted*, *photographed*, *written*, conceived and *edited* by Africans and *filmed in* an African language (in Ukadike 1994:59) [authors' emphasis].

It is conceivable that in Sadoul's time, there was some credit to that statement, given the colonialist tendencies that deliberately excluded black Africans from film production. For instance, the Laval Decree (1934) prohibited Africans in French colonies from making films,

while the British Colonial Film Unit system was designed such that white officers created films using a particular formula to suit the assumed cognition of black audiences (Smyth 1992; Diang'a 2016). If considered today, Sadoul's comments may imply that once a film's production employs foreign services, creative talent or language, its 'African' purity is lost. African filmmakers, if not black, are considered 'foreign'. Even *Sarafina* (1993), based on Mbongeni Ngema's black consciousness musical, produced by Anant Singh and directed by Darrell Roodt, is othered as 'not black' by Ukadike, because it was made before the first democratic elections in 1994. This kind of racial-temporal classification excludes on the basis of geographical, periodised, racial factors. Sections of the African population, international collaborations and critical hybridity are also excluded, and this approach continues to impose the kind of reductive categorization queried by Samuel Lelièvre (2003) in his critique of Ukadike's *Questioning African Cinema* (2002).

Indeed, one of the unresolved questions about African cinema is about what constitutes Africa: "Can there be a single African aesthetic?" (Tomaselli 1993:5). Because of the foregoing contentions, scholars usually differ on some elementary facts. For instance, most writers date the emergence of 'African cinema' to the 1960s (Murphy 2000; Cham 2002; Ukadike 2002; Armes 2006). However, in South Africa, film production began in 1910 with the *Great Kimberly Diamond Robbery* (Gutsche 1972). Defining African cinematic fact on geographical or racial parameters often excludes those films made by colonial organisations or non-black Africans. Roy Armes (2006:26) dismisses the South African films made between 1910 and 1996 as being of no relevance since they were "white cinema constructed for a white audience." Similarly, Lizelle Bisschoff (2009a: 448) discounts films produced in apartheid South Africa from the corpus of 'African cinema' on the grounds that they ignored the country's socio-political realities, a pre-theoretical conclusion questioned by Tomaselli (2007).

Kenneth Harrow (2007) offers a fundamental critique of assumptions embedded in outworn conceptual and essentialist frameworks by repositioning 'African cinema' as a branch of general cinema studies, and not as an object located on the periphery of disciplinary activity, resigned to area studies and parked there by idiosyncratic musings of ideologues whose concerns are inseparable from activism, identity politics and laagered by an over-riding sense of victimhood. The limitations of critical response to African film criticism are examined by Harrow to "clear" away the doctrinaire past through engagement of critical practices. He

invokes the familiar, now, post-Lacanian and postmodern approaches to destabilize the "metaphysics of presence" (p. xiii).

Harrow criticizes Ousmane Sembène, touted as the father of 'African cinema', whose foundation for West African cinema was the price paid by directors who accepted the fundamental assumptions that underpinned his project of "revolt" (p.1); also Sembène had failed to question the notion of history (pp. 10-12). As a result, first generation post-colonial filmmakers for some time were wary of engaging developed nations in co-productions, as highlighted in the Algiers Resolutions[2] (1973) which stated that:

- We do not believe in co-productions in which an imperialist country participates, given the following risks:
- the imperialist country can shed influence through production methods which are foreign to the realities of our countries, and
- The examples of co-productions have given rise to cases of profit and the cultural and economic exploitation of our countries (*Black Camera,* 2010b:163).

Among other things, the Algiers meeting resolved that 'African' filmmakers would seek "new forms" of production that would be different from the means and conceptions of capitalist countries. As a result, some 'African' filmmakers, Sembene among them, deliberately set out to constitute an 'alternative' cinema that "deconstructs dominant cinemas by expressing views of people who are considered 'other'" (Ukadike 1993:43). Early cinematic endeavours, other than 1920s South African Film Productions, which established the foundations of current production cinematic fact in South Africa, therefore, did not set out to compete, on industrial terms with the established cinemas of the world, but rather to re-present and debunk perceived mythical presentations of Africa.

Harrow tries to liberate the discussion from concerns with decolonization, revolt, authenticity and the construction of film criticism around the national models offered by Teshome Gabriel

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[2] The resolutions came out of a meeting for Third World Filmmakers in Algiers December 5 to 14, 1973, which was convened to discuss common problems and goals for third world filmmakers.

and Férid Boughidir where "the past feels like a straitjacket, with it visions of films tied to categories, and categories tied to political agendas that are themselves unwitting servants to historicist, progressivist Enlightenment thought" (p. 28). The concepts of racial, continental or national cinema presuppose a continental or national philosophy in the manner in which films communicate as texts (filmic fact) or the way in which film industries are organized (cinematic fact) (Prammagiore and Wallis 2011; Rosen 2006; Mhando 2000a). The complexity of a 'national' or continental cinema suggests a false cultural homogeneity and ignores other effective identities, which are not bound by territorial boundaries (Mhando 2014 and Mhando 2000a). Is it about the nation of origin of the director, the location where the film was shot, the style, or is it about the genre? (see Tcheuyap 2011). The same questions apply to the cases cited above, of Gubara, Sabela, Roodt, Rautenbach, Devenish and the Hollywood films produced in Zimbabwe, and many more not cited here.

Harrow's analysis reveals how Slavoj Žižek's (1989) concept of "modalities of desire" can be applied across a range of films, no matter their geographic, ethnic or ideological origins. While Harrow's psychoanalytic argument has drawn engagement (see Tomaselli, 2013), his critics (unnamed in his book) may again lament his mobilization of yet another European scholar to contest African analytical dichotomies. His point is that it is a binary of "inside/outside ... that is necessary for a notion of authenticity since the inside is the site of the authentic, and the outside is what gives meaning to that site" (pp. 115-6).

We observe that early discourses of 'African cinema' are connected to the celluloid motion picture tradition, which had strong roots in French speaking parts of West and North Africa, largely because of the strong financial backing of the French Bureau of African Cinema. As a result, there was a bias towards films from this region in a film festival that was supposedly 'African', the *Festival anafricain du cinéma de Ouagadougou* (FESPACO) (see McCain 2011; Bisschoff 2009b). There was a perception that Francophone Africa had made more films than Anglophone Africa (Diawara, 1987) although apartheid South Africa was completely discounted from this equation (though now filmic fact of previously excluded directors like Sabela, van der Merwe and Donald Swanson are conferred recognition from within a liberated South Africa). It is for this reason that Zimbabwean-raised filmmaker Michael Raeburn claimed that filmmaking as a profession only existed in Francophone Africa (see Hungwe 2001). It is apparent that most books on African national cinemas rely on the history of production and cultural identity in individual countries, classified in linguistic regions

(Anglophone, Lusophone, etc.). Blandine Stefanson and Sheila Petty's (2015) *Directory of World Cinema* series, instead, offers a structure based on film reviews classified into film genres. The genre and theme chapters opened new insights by juxtaposing countries that are not usually associated, for example Mozambique and Algeria, which are rich in film adaptations of literature. The concentration of early academic scrutiny on the French West African cinematic fact was therefore, merely a reflection of the reality at the time. As a result, the beginnings of Nollywood, now the most significant film industry in Africa, were under-appreciated. Slow were efforts to study the emerging Nollywood's informal video film services network and to appropriate its cinematic fact into other contexts of production elsewhere on the continent.

Film services in the global scope

A services approach to film production in Africa is proposed as a complementary theory to studying films produced in Africa. Early studies included Tomaselli (2013) and Gustav Visser (2014) on competitive advantage and spatialization of services, and Mboti's (2011a) attempt to map the film services in Durban's industry and to determine, therefore, Durban's 'film friendliness', and to what extent it was a film city (Mboti 2011a; Naidoo 2012). The empirical research led by Mboti (2011b) implicitly draws on the cinematic fact conceptual framework offered here, but actively mobilising the film services framework. This approach shifts the attention of analysis from film content to organizational networks, infrastructure and intermediate inputs exploited in the production and distribution of film. The argument is that emphasis needs to no longer focus on individual products or filmic fact (particular films) but on processes or services provided to production, including tax incentives, capacity building and loan financing. Filmmakers and analysts ought to consider film industries in a more holistic manner, also appreciating that production initiatives alone are not adequate if the audience is not considered. Capacitating the exhibition end of the film value chain should, therefore be seen as also creating demand for production. To exemplify, small budget productions can be stimulated by creating exhibition mini-complexes in the poorer high-density black suburbs that currently lack leisure time infrastructure (Mboti 2012). This framework might offer an alternative avenue towards understanding 'African' cinematic fact. Such an approach is liberated from continental, national and other identity definers. It allows film analysts to assess the cinematic fact for its economic and creative value, even when complemented by an analysis of content (filmic fact).

The evidence and literature cited above suggests that instead of describing the content of films produced on the continent in universalist terms, a film services framework would allow scholars to map the networks of businesses and processes that offer support for the production of film (Wasko, 2003; Goldsmith and O'Regan, 2005; Clouse 2012; Barbash and Taylor 1997; Ureke 2016a). It would also help cineastes to distinguish between a production context of film and the context of production (value chain or political economy). For Hollywood, most of these services are centralised in Los Angeles, although they are sometimes dispersed around the world (Wasko, 2003). Even for Nollywood, the services are increasingly becoming dispersed from Nigeria to the diaspora (Hoffman 2013; Krings and Okome 2013; Samyn 2013).

Implicit in the film services approach is the concept of 'film friendliness' (Goldsmith and O'Regan, 2005; Goldsmith et al, 2010; Piva et al 2011; Clouse, 2012). Film friendly locations are those spaces that have a disposition towards production, which is evident in their people, companies and governments. A services approach, beckons as one of the potentially user-friendly concepts of dissecting a complex trade such as Nollywood. The Nigerian industry has thrived on the back of an informal economy and widespread adoption of digital technology, both of which are immanent in the developing world. Nollywood film services can be described as a "constellation of small enterprises, which disappear and reappear according to the economic conditions" (Jedlowski, 2013:27). Largely, Nollywood thrives on an entrepreneurial spirit driven by grassroots filmmakers in contrast to formal models that depend on state funding, broadcast commissioning and co-production (Mistry and Ellapen, 2013). This is a uniquely Nollywood film services framework, which although now influencing many developing countries, should not be mistaken for an 'African' aesthetic.

A film services approach is favoured because traditional media studies approaches such as cultural studies and political economy tend to focus on the macro-economic and cultural factors affecting film production and consumption. Two positions are distinct: first, a neo-Marxist perspective, which proposes film industries and products that either "subvert or exist independently of a capitalist superstructure" (Zacks, 1995:7) and second; a globalization perspective that considers mutual benefit in this relationship between Hollywood and 'other' film industries (Goldsmith et al. 2010). Either way, the increasing dispersal of film services from Hollywood sometimes offers economic benefits to those places that interact with the US film industry on various platforms. There is, in this regard, an increasing cross-pollination of

finance, personnel and creative talent between Hollywood and the rest of the world, as Ben Goldsmith and his colleagues posit in their Global Hollywood thesis.

The 'Global Hollywood' is characterized by geographic dispersal of film services, with films being made and set in different places employing finances, actors and crews drawn from many countries, hence a co-production imperative. As a result, co-productions between Hollywood and Western European producers have been on the rise since the 1990s. This has many advantages: because of their 'local' components, co-productions qualify for most modes of public funding, including grants and tax incentives. For instance, in Canada, they benefit from the Canadian Television Fund and provincial tax credits (Baltruschat 2002 & 2012). Furthermore, 'local' film industries benefit in terms of financing of projects as well as creative and technical resources from Hollywood, in addition to expanded horizons of film distribution. For this reason, the European Union (EU) provides funding under EURIMAGES which since 1988 has supported EU films that promote Europe's cultural diversity, regardless of whether the films make a profit or not (Royer, 2010).

A film services framework would also show the downside of co-productions, which involve a tedious amount of paperwork and often result in the loss of creative control. As a result, co-productions create a filmic fact with "a bias for particular genres such as science fiction, adventure films, and television programs that are neither spatially nor temporally bound, but occur in a fictitious place" (Baltruschat 2002:4).

A film services approach would also allow for a dissection of industry by industry to determine its economic value and the nature of services within it. The South African film industry, as an example, contributes about R3.5 billion to GDP (Young 2013) and up to R5.5 billion in related economic activities (NFVF 2010). The industry created more than 15 000 jobs in 2012 and had grown by 14 percent in the five years before 2013 (Young 2013). In terms of film services, the country had technically advanced production facilities (with over 150 registered production companies), casting and crew agencies, set designers and prop suppliers, which were attracted by the country's well developed transport and communication infrastructure (NFVF 2010; see also Visser 2014). South Africa is mostly used as a backdrop in Hollywood production. In other words, the country is commoditized as a location and sold to the global filmmaking industry, which is, however, not concerned with the making of narratives about South Africa. Dissecting

respective industry according to their film services would make it possible, as above, to map their input and output.

The 'woods' taxonomy and industry margins in Africa

Just like 'African cinema', the term 'African film industry' is also cumbersome, not just because of its 'African' appellation but also on whether any country in Africa has reached the level of 'industry' in film production. The term film services industry might help navigate the uncertainty surrounding the existence of a genuine 'film industry' in any developing world context. Nitin Govil (2013) asks important questions in regarding industry:

> What are the social, textual, political, and cultural infrastructures and interactions assembled under the sign of "industry"? What are these formal and informal processes of assembly, and how do exchange practices move in and out of industry status? In other words, how are industries "made up"? (2013:173).

Most film economies in Africa have informally constituted film services and rely on donor capital, whenever available. The cinematic fact is not accorded development status given to other sectors of African economies; hence the term 'film industry', at least in the classical sense, is a misnomer under such circumstances (Ukadike 1994; Diawara 1997). Jonathan Dockney (2010:169) points out that "The African film industry is a cinema of artists - a structural anomaly - rather than being an industry as practiced in other countries," while Onookome Okome (1996) likewise, argues that Nigerian cinema is not yet an industry because "industrial organisation implies specialization of labour" (1996:58). Jonathan Haynes extends the same view to the 'African' cinematic fact:

> This cinema has never approached commercial viability in the form of a real industry that produces on the basis of profits from previous production; instead, it depends on the drip of grants from foreign sources, administered intravenously. It has established a small but respected niche for itself in the contexts of international cinema, but has reached audiences in Africa only sporadically and fleetingly (Haynes 2011:67).

Although Okome's, Haynes' and other scholars' views regarding the existence of a film industry in Africa appear valid, they have become dated and in need of a revision. The fact that there is no specialization and the basic technology is not in place, does not indicate the absence of an industry, but that there are serious gaps in the value chain in terms of available film services. The contention of the term 'industry' in describing African filmmaking activities

stems from the fact that, in many cases, these procedures are not formally constituted. They have been described as a 'shadow economy', which "is a space of unmeasured, untaxed and unregulated economic activity" (Lobato 2012:40). However, alternative definitions recognise even the informal sector as an 'industry'. The International Labour Organisation defines informal industry along six criteria, namely: " a) ease of entry; b) reliance on indigenous resources; c) family ownership of enterprises; d) small scale of operation; e) labour intensive and adopted technology; f) skills acquired outside the formal school system; and g) unregulated and competitive prices" (Lobato 2012:40). Most film sectors in Africa are structured informally in response to social and economic conditions in more or less the same manner described above. This informal setup is captured by Michael Raeburn, citing the example of a film he made:

> … *Home Sweet Home* … was made with this tiny little company, and a camera the size of your tape recorder. It cost very little to make it and that is what Africa and the Third World needs. You don't want to wait for three million dollars.... I wish there was somebody who had the energy and is inspired to make these kinds of films. Entertainment films with a little video projector in the urban area and in the rural areas. You could earn a good a living. You would be able to make one film after the other and the whole thing will expand. You would not rely on the government or donors (interviewed by Kedmon Hungwe 2001)[3].

The rise of the Nollywood style (simply a value chain comprising shadow film services) has revolutionized the traditional perceptions of industry as formal spaces only. Nollywood has risen against the backdrop of informality and now influences many other 'industries' that are appropriating its practices and processes in film production. Matthias Krings and Okome (2013) reflect on how Nollywood-styled film services have been appropriated elsewhere on the continent and abroad. In many cases, what filmmakers appropriate is the Nollywood cinematic fact model, although their own narratives remain uniquely theirs. A case can be cited here of the appropriation of Nollywood video films, that are re-edited with KiSwahili commentary, to create uniquely Tanzanian narratives (Böhme 2013).

Nollywood is rated as the second largest film industry worldwide in terms of volumes of productions (second to Bollywood), and third (after Hollywood and Bollywood) in terms of revenue. This success is underpinned by the adoption of video technology coupled with high-

[3] From http://www.ed.mtu.edu/~khungwe/afrika/kedmon-hungwe/michael-raeburn.html.

energy trade but without the huge capital and formalization of other industries (Haynes 2011). The Nigerian industry is made up of "a shifting field of countless independent contractors" and is "openly commercial, culturally and ideologically dispersed, with tendencies towards sensationalism and stereotype" (Geiger 2012:5). This shiftiness and 'disorder' has been the main criticism leveled against Nollywood (Okome 1996). However, the same attributes are also valorised as a reflection of the radicalism of the industry, which goes against the canonized 'orderliness' of Western cinema (Geiger 2012). In so-being, Nollywood's mercantile video industry has resisted capitalist structuralism while simultaneously telling African stories that Africans in Nigeria and beyond identify with, showcasing Africa's successes: its landmark features, its successful persons and its traditional culture, contrary to stories of war, disease and poverty shown in foreign films (Haynes 2011).

The 'woods' taxonomy might just be a way of getting around the above contestations of continental/racial labels as well as canonized definitions of industry. Instead of calling it a film industry, why not simply call it a 'wood'? After all, Hollywood has gotten away with it. This categorisation, what Tcheuyap (2011:11) calls 'cinematographic citizenship' could be an amicable way of classifying similar or related film service providers under one appellation, compared to placing them under the national, racial or continental banner. In that regard, names such as Nollywood (Nigeria), Bongowood (Tanzania), Bollywood (India), Hollyveld (South Africa), Riverwood (Kenya), Ausiewood (Australia) and Zollywood (Zimbabwe) are much more than mimicry of Hollywood but an indicator that their respective productions probably share the same film services and belong to a common cinematic fact context, sometimes bounded by common geographical boundaries.

There is some sentiment, however, that the etymology of the 'woods' is merely a 'canon of conformity' to a global cinematic fact (Soyinka-Airewele 2010; Soyinka 2013). From this perspective, one can argue that [certain players] in developing film industries, emulate and appropriate Hollywood film services, techniques and, sometimes narratives (filmic fact). This 'Hollywoodization' of non-American film industries has implicitly become a condition for films to earn international recognition and critical acclaim (Ezra 2007). The Hollywood filmic and cinematic fact is thus framed as the prototype (Mhando 2000, Gaynor 2009). Pursuant to this argument, Schaefer and Karan (2011) criticize a Hollywood-influenced 'globalized *mise-en-scène*', which has displaced Indian themes in some Bollywood films. Similar concerns have been raised elsewhere with, for instance, African filmmakers' mimicry of Hollywood being

labelled as “retarded infantilism” which negatively influences cultural consciousness (Soyinka 2013).

It is also possible that the ‘woods’ mimic and simultaneously subvert the Hollywood canon. The ‘other’ industries now claim their own territory in markets traditionally dominated by Hollywood. The ‘woods’ classification in this instance, becomes a definer of the film services employed within a particular cinematic fact context, which are in turn appropriated in other production contexts. The shadow film service economy of Nollywood in particular offers a feasible formula to developing film industries such as Bongowood and Zollywood, so much that the former is threatening to swallow the identities of the emerging industries (Garritano 2013). In Zimbabwean popular discourse, for example, ‘African movies’ are synonymous with Nigerian films, as if the former country did not also have its own productions. In spite of this, Nollywood itself is not a homogenous entity. It is made up of various film service providers, mostly private entrepreneurs with no prior training (Ebewo, 2007), while foreign businesspeople are extensively involved in its distribution (Ukadike, 1994, Diawara 1987). Furthermore, far from being ‘national’, the industry is showing signs of regionalism as indicated by the themes of some movies. As a result, some Kano-based filmmakers have coined the term ‘Kanywood’ for their regional industry (Ebewo, 2007). For the foregoing reasons, there ought to be a departure from defining ‘African films’ to films produced in Africa, a view shared by Lindiwe Dovey (2015) in describing ‘films made by Africans’ or, as Modisane (2013) calls it, ‘black-centred’ cinema. This is a way of getting around the essentialist definitions of ‘African cinema’ or ‘African film industry’.

Observers who problematize the existence of a film ‘industry’ in Africa pin the problem down to social and economic problems, as Ukadike (1993:55) says: “If African cinema is a rare and specialised, and not an industrialized art form, it is because of the social, political and economic circumstances regulating production.” This thinking resonates with an observation made in the Algiers Charter on African cinema, 1975 that: “The problems of cinema production in the countries of the Third World are closely linked to the economic, political and social realities of each of them” (*Black Camera*, 2010a:162) and the Niamey Manifesto (1982) which also observed that the viability of film production was closely linked to the exploitation of cinema theatres, importation and distribution of films as well as technical infrastructure and training. What this points to is that a film industry (cinematic fact) is as good or as bad as the film services within it.

Contemporary scholars concur that filmmaking is an especially demanding enterprise in Africa because of the underdevelopment of services (Paleker 2008; Mhando and Kipeja 2010; Haynes 2011). It is for this reason that Sembéne described filmmaking in Africa as 'mégotage' – similar to scrounging around for cigarette butts (Diawara 1987; Harrow 2007; Haynes 2011). The scrounging occurs at the level of financing. According to Haynes (2011:74), it takes lunatic commitment on the part of an individual to get a film made. The filmmaker has to assume many roles within the production value chain with very little supporting or competing structures. Thus the underdevelopment of film services in Africa can be attributed to the lack of both interest and power, by post-colonial African elites, to invest in culture (Haynes 2011; Okome 1996). For the situation to improve, there is need for a robust film services framework underpinned by supportive government policy and the involvement of private investors in the industry (Okome 1996). Production initiatives need to move away from the "educational imperative" to "something more than dogmatic" (Harrow 2013:ix). Many indicators, as discussed in this article point towards a need to move away from 'African cinema' to more holistic, context-specific approaches that appreciate all the creative and technical processes constituting the cinematic fact.

Conclusion

A film services approach to analysing film industries has been suggested. This suggestion comes after taking note of the inadequacies of an 'African cinema' approach that lumps together films on racial, geographical and ideological bases. The suggested approach considers the organizational arrangements, networks and capabilities existing in a particular location to service the production of films. It is a holistic context-centred approach that enables film analysts to appreciate the micro-processes driving film industries. As such, service providers residing in particular locations are akin to cinematographic citizens and can be classified as a 'wood' hence names such as Hollywood, Bollywood, Nollywood, Zollywood and Bongowood. Although classical definitions of industry may be a misnomer when describing film sectors on the continent, a more inclusive approach would extend to these 'othered' industries. Our article merely serves as a pointer, a suggestion of an approach that scholars of screen media studies in Africa may find worth considering.

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